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Legislative Document

No. 1309

H.P. 906

House of Representatives, April 4, 2017

**Resolve, To Establish the Commission To Study Business
Ownership by Racial and Ethnic Populations and the Wealth Gap in
the State**

(EMERGENCY)

Reference to the Committee on State and Local Government suggested and ordered printed.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "R. B. Hunt".

ROBERT B. HUNT
Clerk

Presented by Representative TALBOT ROSS of Portland.
Cosponsored by Senator SAVIELLO of Franklin and
Representatives: GATTINE of Westbrook, GOLDEN of Lewiston, SYLVESTER of Portland,
TIPPING of Orono, WARREN of Hallowell, Senators: CHENETTE of York, CYRWAY of
Kennebec, ROSEN of Hancock.

1 **Emergency preamble. Whereas,** acts and resolves of the Legislature do not
2 become effective until 90 days after adjournment unless enacted as emergencies; and

3 **Whereas,** recent reports reveal that the ongoing structural barriers to wealth equality
4 in the nation cannot be combated at the individual or household level, and that public
5 policy is needed to eliminate racial wealth disparities; and

6 **Whereas,** Maine needs to undertake a study to determine which policy interventions
7 will have the most impact on bridging the wealth gap between historically disadvantaged
8 racial and ethnic populations and the rest of the citizens in the State; and

9 **Whereas,** this legislation establishes the Commission To Study Business Ownership
10 by Racial and Ethnic Populations and the Wealth Gap in the State; and

11 **Whereas,** the study must be initiated before the 90-day period expires in order that
12 the study may be completed and a report submitted in time for submission to the next
13 legislative session; and

14 **Whereas,** in the judgment of the Legislature, these facts create an emergency within
15 the meaning of the Constitution of Maine and require the following legislation as
16 immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety; now,
17 therefore, be it

18 **Sec. 1. Commission established. Resolved:** That the Commission To Study
19 Business Ownership by Racial and Ethnic Populations and the Wealth Gap in the State,
20 referred to in this resolve as "the commission," is established; and be it further

21 **Sec. 2. Commission membership. Resolved:** That the commission consists of
22 the following 13 members:

23 1. Two members of the Senate appointed by the President of the Senate, including
24 members from each of the 2 parties holding the largest number of seats in the Legislature;

25 2. Four members of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the
26 House, including members from each of the 2 parties holding the largest number of seats
27 in the Legislature;

28 3. A representative of a community development organization appointed by the
29 President of the Senate;

30 4. A representative of an economic policy organization appointed by the Speaker of
31 the House;

32 5. The administrator of the Maine District Office of the federal Small Business
33 Administration, or the administrator's designee;

34 6. Two members of the public engaged in working with communities of color in
35 business development, one of whom is appointed by the President of the Senate and one
36 of whom is appointed by the Speaker of the House; and

1 7. The president of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, or the president's
2 designee.

3 The commission shall invite the participation, as a voting member, of a representative of
4 the Native American community; and be it further

5 **Sec. 3. Chairs. Resolved:** That the first-named Senate member is the Senate
6 chair and the first-named House of Representatives member is the House chair of the
7 commission; and be it further

8 **Sec. 4. Appointments; convening of commission. Resolved:** That all
9 appointments must be made no later than 30 days following the effective date of this
10 resolve. The appointing authorities shall notify the Executive Director of the Legislative
11 Council once all appointments have been completed. After appointment of all members,
12 the chairs shall call and convene the first meeting of the commission. If 30 days or more
13 after the effective date of this resolve a majority of but not all appointments have been
14 made, the chairs may request authority and the Legislative Council may grant authority
15 for the commission to meet and conduct its business; and be it further

16 **Sec. 5. Duties. Resolved:** That the commission shall study income levels of and
17 opportunities available to historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic populations in the
18 State and shall examine quantitative and qualitative data associated with those
19 populations regarding business ownership, household assets, debts and income, housing,
20 employment and access to inherited wealth, capital and benefits. The commission shall
21 consider proposals to diversify business ownership to include those populations and
22 bridge the gaps in wealth acquisition, including but not limited to, proposals to:

23 1. Develop a program to provide to aspiring and new business owners technical
24 assistance workshops and training on topics such as the creation of business plans,
25 accessing capital and funding and securing job training;

26 2. Provide assistance to vendors to become state-certified and to create a register and
27 clearinghouse to serve as a resource for state-certified vendors seeking government
28 contracts; and

29 3. Establish an office to coordinate the educational and technical assistance needs of
30 emerging small businesses and to provide information to small businesses seeking to
31 open, operate and expand their businesses; and be it further

32 **Sec. 6. Staff assistance. Resolved:** That the Legislative Council shall provide
33 necessary staffing services to the commission; and be it further

34 **Sec. 7. Report. Resolved:** That, no later than December 6, 2017, the commission
35 shall submit a report that includes its findings and recommendations, including suggested
36 legislation, for presentation to the Second Regular Session of the 128th Legislature.

37 **Emergency clause.** In view of the emergency cited in the preamble, this
38 legislation takes effect when approved.

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SUMMARY

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This resolve establishes the Commission To Study Business Ownership by Racial and

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Ethnic Populations and the Wealth Gap in the State.